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## The SDI gap

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The United States is tumbling into what might be called an "SDI gap." Moscow continues building its own Starsky Warsky system, while America hems and haws on the Strategic Defense Initiative. And this is no parlor game, but a life-or-death struggle. "Time is running out for the United States," writes Robert Jastrow, founder and former director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, in the current issue of *National Review*.

Dr. Jastrow notes that Robert Gates, nominated this week as CIA director, recently "confirmed reports that the Soviets were constructing three more huge phased-array radars in the western U.S.S.R. These mammoth radars, each as large as a football field, close the final gap in the network of radars guarding the missile corridors into the Soviet Union . . . This recently discovered buildup of Soviet ABM defenses has been going on in concert with the buildup of a first-strike ICBM arsenal."

Yet this week President Reagan postponed again a decision on early SDI deployment, and Secretary of State George Shultz says a decision probably won't be made this year.

What is the administration thinking of? As we dawdle, the Soviets forge ahead, enveloping their missiles in a protective shield while simultaneously deploying additional SS-24s, SS-25s, and other first-strike weapons.

According to Dr. Jastrow, the U.S. has only about five years before the Soviets complete their elaborate offensive and defensive network. "The bottom line is that the Soviet Union is developing a lethal combination of a first-strike attack force and a defense against retaliation by U.S. ballistic missiles," Dr. Jastrow warns.

Mr. Reagan rightly considers SDI — a defensive system to safeguard not only missile silos, but the American people as well — his major legacy to the country. Yet administration arms control advocates seem to have turned him in the direction of delay and, to be blunt, appeasement.

He should not forget that his successor may be Gary Hart or some other foe of SDI. While there's still time he should make SDI such an integral part of American defenses that even the most naive or misguided successor would hesitate to kill it.